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SUBJECT: SUBJECT: BACKGROUNDER FOR NATO PARLIAMENTARY  
ASSEMBLY MEETING, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

(U) This message is sensitive but unclassified. Please handle accordingly.

11. (SBU) We look forward to your visit to Brussels, where your presence will remind Allies once again of the strong Congressional support for the Alliance. Today, NATO is conducting operations on three continents bringing peace and stability to Afghanistan and the Balkans, while supporting peacekeeping operations in Darfur and security training in Iraq. NATO is also building new partnerships with like-minded security providers, such as Australia, Japan, and Sweden, who play vital roles in supporting NATO missions. The Alliance continues to serve as an agent of transformation for the Nations' military forces, making them increasingly agile and expeditionary, as required for the challenges of the 21st century. The Riga Summit confirmed NATO's door remains open to any European democracy and offered robust enhancements to the Alliance's partnership programs with over thirty countries in Eurasia, the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia.

12. (SBU) Afghanistan remains job one for the Alliance. At recent meetings of Foreign and Defense Ministers, the Alliance reaffirmed its strong political commitment to Afghanistan, and embraced a Comprehensive Approach, involving the full use of political, economic, and military means to bring about peace and stability in Afghanistan. Allies and partners provided new civilian assistance contributions and a few new military contributions. That said, we must continue to press Allies to match words with concrete action to fill mission force requirements, to eliminate the most harmful restrictions on national forces (caveats), and provide high-impact reconstruction assistance. Allied willingness to give is affected by a number of internal political, economic, and military factors which we'll discuss in detail when we see you.

Post Riga Agenda

13. (SBU) The Riga Summit on November 28-29 2006 demonstrated once again that the U.S. is leading strongly in NATO. Alliance Heads of State and Government strengthened their commitment to NATO's Afghanistan and Balkans missions and adopted new initiatives to further enhance the Alliance's role as a 21st century security provider, such as: enhanced coordination among Special Forces; the establishment of a consortium of countries who will buy C-17 aircraft to provide much needed strategic lift capabilities; consideration of a Middle East Security Cooperation Center with partners in the

Mediterranean and the Gulf; proposals for enhanced stability and reconstruction operations; and a tasking to examine NATO's role in energy security. Operationally, we showcased NATO as an alliance that can go where the threat is and perform the full range of operations required for mission success. The Alliance aims to work seamlessly with other key actors \* the United Nations, European Union, African Union, non-governmental organizations, and development agencies as part of a broader and growing network of institutions seeking to address global challenges.

-- Afghanistan: There is no better example of NATO transformation into a true global instrument than Afghanistan. NATO, through its International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), now commands more than 34,000 troops -- including approximately 15,000 U.S. personnel -- spanning the entire territory of Afghanistan. All 26 Allies plus 11 NATO partner countries contribute, showcasing our vision of a Global Partnership. ISAF is driving real transformation at NATO - changes the U.S. has sought are being validated by the mission, such as strategic airlift, increased attention to Afghan National Army and Police training, SOF coordination, and intelligence sharing. NATO's success in Afghanistan is not guaranteed, and we have been pushing Allies hard to provide NATO military commanders the resources and forces they say they need to take the fight to the Taliban this spring, and to deliver the follow-up assistance necessary to secure military gains. President Bush's \$10.6 billion request to Congress for Afghanistan development and security force training funds, announced here by Secretary Rice at the January 26 ministerial, was a clarion signal to Allies to of U.S. commitment. While leading by example, we need to keep urging Allied leaders and legislators to dig deep and follow

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up on the commitment made by Heads of State and Government at the Riga Summit: to ensure that ISAF has the forces, resources, and flexibility needed to ensure the mission's continued success.

-- Kosovo: NATO remains firmly engaged in Kosovo through the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) which is the Alliance's second largest military mission, with over 16,000 troops from more than 25 countries participating. On February 2, U.N. Special Envoy Ahtisaari presented his proposal for the resolution of Kosovo's status to Belgrade and Pristina and plans to have both parties engage on the document over the next couple of weeks. SYG Jaap de Hoop Scheffer will travel to the region on February 15 with a message of NATO unity behind Ahtisaari.

Current planning is focused on providing a safe and secure environment during the concluding phase of the status process, as well as preparing for NATO's post-status role as both security provider and in mentoring and training a new Kosovo security force. The U.S. remains committed to peace and stability in the Balkans with approximately 1,650 troops in Kosovo and assists the other countries in the region on defense reform.

-- Global Partnership: At NATO's Riga Summit, the Alliance agreed to expand its partnerships to interested democratic Contact Countries, to open the Partnership for Peace (PfP) "toolbox" to these new global partners, and to improve political consultations with all partners through new, more flexible "26 n" formats. This has already led to high-level consultations, including January visits by the Japanese and Pakistani Prime Ministers respectively to brief the NAC, as well as the first stages of opening all PfP tools to Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative participants and to other contributors to NATO-led operations, from Australia to Argentina.

-- Enlargement: Reflecting NATO's open door policy, the Alliance at Riga invited Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia into NATO's Partnership for Peace program and looks forward to fostering further reform efforts in those respective countries. The Alliance continues to actively

engage both Georgia and Ukraine to deepen their respective reform efforts as they move closer to Euro-Atlantic integration. Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia are all working hard to make the grades in 2008.

-- Russia: The NATO-Russia Council (NRC) continues to foster engagement with Russia as we have moved forward on joint initiatives such as counter-narcotics training in Central Asia, nuclear emergency drills, and some theatre missile defense work. For the first time in history, a Russian warship served under a NATO flag last year as part of Operation Active Endeavor, the Alliance's Article V counter-terrorism operation in the Mediterranean. The Russians intend on participating again in Active Endeavor and will supply another warship this year. However, differences between Russia and the Alliance continue, particularly over NATO's partnership with Georgia and over Kosovo's final status. At the recent Munich Security Conference, President Putin signaled a more robust assertion of Russian national interests and blasted NATO's enlargement, evidence that 2007-2008 may be complex years for the NRC.

14. (SBU) As always, we're working on a rich and ambitious agenda in support of U.S. global interests, and I look forward to welcoming you to Brussels and discussing this agenda with you this weekend. As usual, we'll put you to work pushing your Allied counterparts to support NATO strongly, particularly in Afghanistan where both the stakes and opportunities are enormous this year.

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